

VZCZCXRO6798
PP RUEHPA
DE RUEHUJA #0598/01 0861725
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 271725Z MAR 07
FM AMEMBASSY ABUJA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9010
INFO RUEHZK/ECOWAS COLLECTIVE
RUEHWR/AMEMBASSY WARSAW 0193
RUEHCD/AMCONSUL CIUDAD JUAREZ 0191
RUEHOS/AMCONSUL LAGOS 6445
RHEBAAA/DEPT OF ENERGY WASHINGTON DC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHINGTON DC
RUEKJCS/DIA WASHINGTON DC
RHMFISS/HQ USEUCOM VAIHINGEN GE
RUFOADA/JAC MOLESWORTH RAF MOLESWORTH UK

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ABUJA 000598

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DOE FOR CAROLYN GAY

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/26/2017

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [KDEM](#) [NI](#)

SUBJECT: ELECTION PARTNERS CONCERNED OVER VOTERS ROLL

REF: ABUJA 524 AND PREVIOUS

ABUJA 00000598 001.2 OF 002

Classified By: Ambassador John Campbell for reasons 1.4 (b) & (d)

¶1. (C) Summary: A random spot check of the quality of the voter's register by an American elections partner has raised troubling questions about the quality of INEC's final product. The check revealed numerous duplicate registrants, obviously underage children registered as voters, and entries lacking photographs and or fingerprints. Although the spot check was for single state, it represents yet another indication that INEC's preparation may present problems on election day. In addition, INEC has yet to print ballots, publicize the locations of polling stations, or announce its policy on accreditation of election observers. The list of snafus is exacerbated, American election partners say, by the uncertainty surrounding numerous outstanding court cases which could also have a direct impact on the elections. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (C) Ambassador, DCM, Poloffs and USAID officials met with representatives from PACT and IFES on March 22 to review Nigeria's progress in preparing for the upcoming elections. While the implementing partners continue to prepare, they are troubled by the lack of overall progress in preparations including printing ballots, formulating election observer accreditation policy, and publicly identifying polling locations. This long list of substantive preparation shortcomings raises legitimate questions about whether INEC will be prepared to hold elections as scheduled, according to the IFES and PACT country directors.

Election Preparations

¶3. (C) The representative from IFES presented a hard-copy sample of the voter's register for Bauchi State that he obtained from INEC. The document contained numerous photographs of young children who were registered as voters with ages listed as 18 and above. The list also contained names without any identifying photos, creating suspicion about the potential for manipulation. While the sample presented was a random view from a single state, and not the complete registry, the IFES director believed that it was a likely preview of patterns which would recur in the remainder

of the register. The IFES director was troubled by the status of INEC's election preparation, and raised the question of how Nigerians might view the process and outcome of mismanaged elections.

¶4. (C) IFES also noted that recruitment and training of the estimated 500,000 ad-hoc staff who would be deployed around the country had not occurred yet. With 120,000 polling places to staff, the logistics of deployment alone poses major problems. The IFES director revealed that INEC was still debating which form of ballots would be used, and as of March 22, INEC contractors had not started printing the ballots. Concurrently, INEC has not published its requirements for the accreditation of election observers, and the PACT director reported that they have been told that INEC intends to limit the number of international and domestic observers to 2,000 and 60,000 respectively.

Elections Now or Later?

¶5. (C) The election partners in attendance agreed that delaying the elections would not automatically produce a more acceptable voter register. The dilemma of bad elections or delayed elections still stood in the balance, election partners agreed. In addition, one of the numerous cases challenging various aspects of the legality of the preparation (including the quality and timing of voter's registrations and the exclusion of specific candidates) could still result in a delayed election. Currently, there are approximately 30 court cases related to the presidential election in various stages of adjudication.

Comment

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¶6. (C) While the election partners continue to plan for the upcoming elections, their collective assessments are increasingly pessimistic. The emerging worry about the quality of the voter's list has added a new negative element. A key litmus test is likely to occur when political parties and civil society finally get a chance to review INEC's final voter's register. This should also provide a good indication of how Nigerians view the unfolding drama surrounding elections.

CAMPBELL